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AUTHOR	Gorard, Stephen
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ABSTRACT

This book examines the trend toward markets in UK schools by outlining the varied economic and political arguments both for and against increased parental choice. It describes how choice actually takes place--including when the choice takes place, who has the final say, how many schools are considered, and which choice criteria are reported. One of the basic premises of the book is that the full effect of reforms in education policy cannot be seen for at least a generation. To understand some of the longer term implications of competition between schools, the work therefore includes a range of fee-paying schools that are competing in a very volatile localized market in South Wales. Findings are partly based on a survey, with over 1,000 variables gathered from 1,300 respondents using 33 different schools. A key finding is that parental choice of school does not work in South Wales. A recent study of the process of secondary school choice in 700 families using 33 schools concludes that the current market in state schools, supposedly based on rational choice and diversity of provision, will neither improve educational standards nor decrease social stratification. (DFR)

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